



Press Release

Women's Digital Entrepreneurship Programme (WDE)

Episode 8: "Women and Digital Innovation"

29th October 2021, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

SMEs still face challenges in adopting digital innovation in Cambodia in their sectors, both guest speakers said during the eighth episode of the WDE Policy Dialogue.

The eighth episode of the dialogue entitled "**Women and Digital Innovation**" was held on 29th October 2021 with two distinguished guest speakers: Ms RODIONOVA Nataly, Managing Director of IT Academy STEP Cambodia and Founder of Sisters of Code, and Ms Channé Suy Lan, Managing Director of InSTEDD iLab Southeast Asia. This session was moderated by Ms Hay Seangmey, Programme Coordinator of WDE. It mainly discussed the obstacles that hinder women, especially female SME owners, from embracing digital innovation. The session also offered several key solutions.

Ms Channé defined digital innovation in businesses as the use of digital technology in small and large businesses to enhance costs and processes. **Ms Rodionova** stated that digital innovation helps to improve efficiency and provide new solutions for scaling up businesses. As a foreigner living in Cambodia for six years, she has noticed a significant increase in the adoption of digital innovation. Regarding SMEs' challenges in adopting digital innovation, **Ms Channé** mentioned the lack of digital skills, innovation cost, and further support from the government. Likewise, **Ms Rodionova** stressed her concern about the capacity of software developers and scientists to solve complex innovation solutions. The episode also discussed what has been done to support digital innovation in Cambodia. **Ms Rodionova** stated that digital innovation and economy are top priorities in Cambodia's national agenda. Besides, **Ms Channé** praised the importance of increasing internet connectivity and how well the government deals with the pandemic, taking advantage of the increasing internet connection.

The dialogue also touched on women's role in accelerating digital innovation. **Ms Channé** highlighted that although the innovation sector has higher gender equality than other industries, the gender gap remains, limiting the effectiveness of policies crafted to achieve women's welfare. Therefore, a higher representation of women is needed. **Ms Rodionova** explained that while ten per cent of female students are pursuing technology-related majors in Cambodia, only one-third of them would take a career in this field because of family commitment and society's attitudes. Without increasing female representation in decision-making positions and changing public perception towards women in the digital sector, government policies and the private sector's decisions will not reflect Cambodian women's needs.

Lastly, the guest speakers offered recommendations for Cambodian women entrepreneurs to advance their innovative skills and thrive in businesses. **Ms Channé** suggested that women entrepreneurs proactively participate in local and regional networks initiated by the public and private sectors. The more networks they have, the more opportunities and supports they can access. Similarly, **Ms Rodionova** urges women entrepreneurs to be more involved in the digital ecosystem while embracing the growth and courageous mindsets, seeking creative solutions, pursuing lifelong learning, and developing a company culture that supports innovations to enhance their strengths.

For more information about **Women's Digital Entrepreneurship Programme**,

please visit: <https://wdigitalentrepreneurs.org/>

Email: info@wdigitalentrepreneurs.org

Tel: +85577515952/ +85578443757